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SUBJECT: SWEDISH ENVOY TO HORN OF AFRICA TALKS ABOUT SOMALIA

Classified By: Economic Counselor Laura Kirkconnel for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: On September 15, Emboffs met with Swedish Special Envoy to the Horn of Africa Ambassador Marika Fahlen to discuss her 12 day visit to Egypt, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya and Djibouti. Fahlen strongly emphasized the need for a combination of a bottom-up and top-down approach to stabilizing and developing Somalia. She singled out the following as being crucial to achieving this goal:

- gaining greater credibility for the Transitional Federal Government (TFG),
- getting President Sheikh Sharif out of his palace to gain a better grasp of the challenges his government is facing,
- selecting military and police trainees from several different clans,
- utilizing the various Somali diaspora more efficiently,
- distributing aid more efficiently and with greater transparency, and
- coordinating U.S. and EU aid efforts more closely.

End Summary.

¶2. (C) Swedish Special Envoy to the Horn of Africa Ambassador Marika Fahlen told Emboffs on September 15 that in order to stabilize and develop Somalia, the international community needs to utilize a combination of a bottom-up and top-down approach to its aid efforts. Fahlen, who was accompanied by General Pierre Joana, Advisor to Solana, the Council Secretariat, and Jeremy Lester, head of the Horn Africa Section, the EU Commission, returned in early September from a 12-day fact-finding mission to Egypt, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya and Djibouti. Fahlen called the trip "successful" for three reasons: (1) the different branches of the EU had the same impressions and made the same analysis independently; (2) the EU listened to others instead of "telling others what to do"; and (3) the EU strengthened partnerships with the African Union (AU), AMISOM, the U.S. and other regional actors.

¶3. (C) The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) is suffering from serious credibility problems, Fahlen opined. Contrary to what many Western analysts think, Fahlen alleges that a growing number of Somalis are questioning why they should align themselves with a "weak partner," as Fahlen characterized President Sheikh Sharif Ahmed's TFG. The TFG, a moderate Islamist government, is to some extent "imprisoned by its dependency on an international community that continues to scream security, security, security," Fahlen emphasized. Fahlen alleged that Sheikh Sharif is heavily

influenced by the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister.

She stated that "he sees what is going on but lacks the strong personality required to something about this." Fahlen also told us that she feels Sheikh Sharif is not well advised. He cannot gain a full grasp of the situation unless he moves out of his palace and continues to build on the modest gains he has made by emphasizing religion instead of clans, she stated.

14. (C) Fahlen maintained that the international community can best support the TFG by trying to adapt its efforts to the structure the TFG has established. The TFG, according to Fahlen, has organized its government around five clusters: Security; Economy and Accountability; Social Sector Service; Religion and Justice; and International and National Relations. She stated that the EU can do a much better job of channeling its funds into this framework than the UN, as the latter is burdened by comprehensive procedures and regulations. Fahlen commented that the TFG and the UN were "dragging their feet."

15. (C) Fahlen said that the U.S. and the EU must work together to encourage our respective Somali diaspora to return and contribute to the development of Somalia. There is a wealth of talent and cultural knowledge that we are not taking advantage of, she opined. Many of the current TFG representatives are seen as corrupt and "in the pockets of donors," according to Fahlen. In the case of humanitarian assistance, the international community simply has too few people in the field. "Absentee management simply does not work," she stated. How the international community distributes aid is crucial, and we need to re-examine our

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efforts to reach out and make them more transparent, Fahlen emphasized. She commented that Al-Shabaab controls large areas where this assistance is need most, and we cannot access those areas without the permission of this group. Fahlen told us that Al-Shabaab has even established its own NGOs and wants the international community to allow it to distribute aid, which would empower Al-Shabaab and help it gain support from the locals.

16. (C) Fahlen told us she understands the EU's push to focus on security and police but feels that the international community does not recognize the problem involved in establishing a well-functioning professional force. She cited the French effort to train soldiers in Djibouti as a case in point. The government selects the soldiers for French training from a single large clan, which could fuel clan warfare, according to Fahlen. She pointed out that the vast majority of these soldiers are young, illiterate and afraid of the "consequences they might experience" when they return home. There is a great risk that these soldiers will not feel any "national loyalty" but will simply fight for whichever side pays them the most.

17. (C) Although Fahlen did not visit the coastal area of Somalia, she did comment on the issue of piracy. She characterized the pirates being captured as "small fish," adding that what the TFG and international community should do is to track the flow of the money obtained from hijacking ships. Fahlen told us she observed some improved housing, more consumer goods and luxury cars for certain individuals, but she believes the bulk of the ransom money flows to Kenya, Dubai and even London. The TFG is training a coast guard force, but once again, is making the same mistake by selecting trainees from only one clan. The risk is too great that the "coast-guard clan" will simply look after its own interests and line its own pockets, thus fueling the already gigantic problem of corruption that exists throughout Somalia.

18. Comment: Fahlen has a perspective that appears to differ from that of many Western analysts, at least when it comes to how widespread Sheikh Sharif's support is among the

population. She questions how extensive the much-touted "grass-roots" support for the TFG really is. She favors a much closer cooperation with the U.S., mentioning several times in our discussion that the U.S. and the EU must coordinate efforts to stabilize and develop Somalia. (This is a reoccurring theme we have been hearing from our Swedish interlocutors regarding aid and development efforts around the world.) Fahlen's most interesting comment, however, was her opinion that the TFG is weakened by an international community that seeks security at the expense of other efforts, hinting perhaps that some sort of contact with Al-Shabaab might be necessary to distribute aid in certain areas. End Comment,  
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